



DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS
WASHINGTON, DC 20420

DIVERSITY@Work

A PUBLICATION OF THE OFFICE OF DIVERSITY MANAGEMENT & EEO, WWW.VA.GOV/DMEE0

VOLUME 3/ISSUE 2

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2004

Q & A

Improving Access for Minority Vets

In part two of our interview with the Director of VA's Center for Minority Veterans, Chuck Nesby discusses the challenges that face minority vets and what VA is doing to address those issues.

Q: What do you consider to be the most significant challenge or hurdle for minority vets today?



Mr. Nesby: The biggest hurdle for minority veterans is accessing VA benefits and services, which can be affected by geographic location and cultural differences. This is a multi-pronged issue that encompasses medical, educational, financial, and burial benefits as well as communication issues—how the message is or isn't reaching them.

But the Department is helping to address those issues. VA has signed a MOU with the Department of Defense, for instance, that enables record sharing and streamlined services. Military members separating from service will be able to combine their separation physicals with

disability physicals, speeding up those claims. Veterans will be able to fill prescriptions at military bases, a huge boon to the many vets who retire near bases. VA also has an MOU with Health and Human Services to treat American Indian veterans who are members of 550-plus recognized tribes.

Q: Does your office handle discrimination complaints?

Mr. Nesby: Our office doesn't process EEO complaints, but we do examine some of them from a policy standpoint. Our task is to assist and advise the Secretary on issues of policy. We often receive calls regarding complaints, but we channel them directly to minority veterans program coordinators (MVPCs) or the appropriate office for resolution at the lowest practicable levels. By the Secretary's direction, there are about 300 MVPCs to assist and reach out to minority vets in the field—one at every regional office, medical facility, and cemetery. Our staff gathers all contact information, passes it along to field offices, and later follows up to ensure that no inquiry falls through the cracks.■

CELEBRATE!

King Holiday and Black History Month



The Department of Veterans Affairs joins the Nation in observing Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday on January 19 and Black History Month during February.

In 1915, Dr. Carter G. Woodson undertook the task of writing Black Americans into the Nation's history by founding the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, which was later renamed the Association for the Study of

African American Life and History. It was through this organization that Negro History Week was celebrated in 1926 and subsequently, Black History Month was established in 1976.

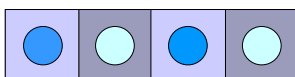
To learn more about VA's National Black Special Emphasis Program, contact Program Manager Wanda J. Jones at (202) 501-2089 or wanda.jones@mail.va.gov.■

In this issue:

FIELD NOTES News You Can Use	2
WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT Association for the Study of African American Life and History	2
SPECIAL EMPHASIS Emergency Planning for People With Disabilities	3
INSIDE STORY Center for Women Veterans Shares FAQs	3
DM&EEO ONLINE	4
CALENDAR	4

Bookmarks

- **Martin Luther King, Jr. Papers Project**
www.stanford.edu/group/King/
- **Institute for Women's Policy Research**
www.iwpr.org
- **American Coalition for Filipino Veterans** <http://usfilvets.tripod.com/acfv>
- **National Society of Hispanic MBAs**
www.nshmba.org
- **U.S. Business Leadership Network**
www.usbln.com
- **Association of American Indian Physicians**
www.aaip.com
- **Paralyzed Veterans of America** www.pva.org



To join *NewsLink*, our free, weekly electronic news service, send an e-mail to dmeeo@mail.va.gov with SUBSCRIBE NEWS in the subject line. Thanks to our *NewsLink* content partners:

- Asian Diversity Magazine
- Black MBA Magazine
- Business & Legal Reports
- DiversityCareers.com
- Federal Employees News
- FedNews Online
- FindLaw
- Government Executive
- Government Procurement
- HireDiversity.com
- Hispanic Business
- HR Executive Magazine
- Indian Country Today
- Journal of Issues in Nursing
- National Org. on Disability
- National Public Radio
- Newsweek
- Pew Hispanic Center
- SHRM
- The Access Board
- USAToday.com
- Washingtonpost.com
- Workforce magazine
- Workindex.com



For More Info

For special observance theme information and diversity-related events, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.

FIELD NOTES

News You Can Use

Online Speakers Bureau

The Office of DM&EEO has launched its nationwide online Speakers Bureau. You can search the online database or sign up as a speaker at www.va.gov/dmeeo/sb/search.asp (registration is open to all).

The database is keyword-searchable by topic, special event, or name. Available topics include diversity, leadership, veterans, and strategic planning, among others. In addition, participants have signed up as speakers for American Indian Heritage Month, Asian Pacific American Heritage Month, Black History Month, Dr. King's Birthday, Hispanic Heritage Month, Historically Black Colleges and Universities Week, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, Women's Equality Day, and Women's History Month.

► More info: www.va.gov/dmeeo

Disabled Vets Get Priority Care

Veterans with any service-connected disability will receive priority health care at VA under a new directive.

Previous guidance guaranteed priority care to veterans disabled at the 50 percent level or greater. Now all vets requiring care for a service-connected disability must be scheduled for a primary care evaluation within 30 days of request.

According to Secretary Anthony Principi, "Caring for veterans with service-connected medical problems is a major reason VA exists. This directive should ease the minds of veterans who no longer have to wait for health care appointments."

► More info: www.va.gov/opa/pressrel

Best of Training Media Review

DM&EEO has partnered with the publication *Training Media Review* to provide free Web access to reviews of diversity training videos, books, software, and online courses. This effort helps managers evaluate training products, and it supports Management Directive 715 addressing proactive prevention of workplace discrimination.

► More info: www.va.gov/dmeeo

WEB SITE SPOTLIGHT

Association for the Study of African American Life and History

www.asalh.com

Content: Dr. Carter G. Woodson, Harvard-trained scholar and the son of former slaves, founded the Association for the Study of African American Life and History (ASALH) in 1915. The Web site is a continuation of his efforts to research and distribute information about African American history.

The Howard University-based ASALH sets the national theme for Black History Month, hosts a national convention, and sponsors an annual theme-based essay contest.

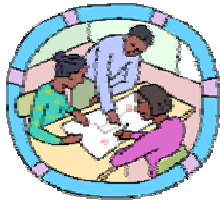
Must-see features: Though ASALH's *Journal of African American History* is not available online, the Web site does offer useful article indexes of past issues. Its Worthy Project and Speakers Bureau pages are also must-sees.

Contact info: Phone, fax, mail, and e-mail contacts are listed on the Mission page. An online guest book is available on the Contact page.

Accessibility: The site has no information regarding accessibility by people with disabilities.

SPECIAL EMPHASIS

Emergency Planning for People With Disabilities



According to a Harris Poll commissioned by the National Organization on Disability (NOD), about half of employed people with disabilities said their workplaces lacked plans to safely evacuate or shelter them.

The good news is that planning help is available.

September 11, 2001, changed things. There's a red-hot focus on emergency planning now, for one thing. Workplace fire drills have become full-scale evacuation exercises that help prepare workers for terrorist attacks, civil disturbances, and natural and man-made disasters as well as burning buildings.

The Department of Labor estimates that more than 120,000 employees with disabilities work in Federal government buildings. (Nationwide, about 20 percent of citizens has a disability.) So the safety of all government workers—including those with disabilities—has become a high priority.

NOD launched the Emergency Preparedness Initiative (EPI) after 9/11 to ensure that emergency managers address disability concerns and include people with special needs in the planning process.

NOD also published the *EPI Guide for Emergency Managers, Planners, and Responders*, which is available for download at the site listed below.

The *EPI Guide* summarizes what planners should do to ensure that people with disabilities are involved in the four phases of emergency management: mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery. In short, planners should

- identify staff who may have special needs before, during, and after an emergency.
- customize awareness messages.
- educate people about realistic expectations of public services during and after an emergency.
- involve the disability community in planning.
- work with industry groups to fill gaps in equipment, materials, staff, and other support.

The guide's message is "be prepared." When people with disabilities become partners in the emergency planning process, they help increase everyone's survival rates.

► More info: www.nod.org/content.cfm?id=1267

INSIDE STORY

The Center for Women Veterans Shares FAQs (and Answers!)

The Center for Women Veterans publishes a top-25 list of frequently asked questions. Here's an excerpt from its Web site.

What services are available to women vets?

Response: A full continuum of comprehensive medical services including health promotion and disease prevention, primary care, women's gender-specific health care, (e.g., hormone replacement therapy, breast and gynecological care, maternity and limited infertility (excluding in-vitro fertilization)), acute medical/surgical, telephone triage, emergency and substance abuse treatment, mental health, domiciliary, rehabilitation, and long-term care. VA researchers at many VA facilities also conduct medical research on women's health.

How and where do I find historical information on women veterans?

Response: Contact the Women In Military Service

for America Memorial located at the gates of Arlington Cemetery at www.womensmemorial.org.

How can I get gender-specific services, including pap smears, mammography, prenatal care, and childcare?

Response: Apply for VA health care enrollment by completing VA Form 10-10EZ. The 10-10EZ may be obtained by visiting, calling, or writing any VA health care facility or veterans' benefits office. You can also call toll-free 1-877-222-8387 or access the form on the Internet at www.va.gov. The provision of health care to non-veteran children is limited to those instances where specific authority is given to VA by law. Contact your local VA health care facility and ask to speak with the Women Veterans Coordinator.

► More info: www.va.gov/womenvet. ■

Diversity@Work

Newsletter published bimonthly by the National Office of Diversity Management and Equal Employment Opportunity. To subscribe or unsubscribe, send an e-mail request to dmeeo@mail.va.gov.

CONTACT US

Mail:

Department of Veterans Affairs
Office of DM&EEO (06)
810 Vermont Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20420

Phone:

(202) 501-1970

Fax:

(202) 501-2145

E-mail the Editor:

dmeeo@mail.va.gov

Visit our Web site
For additional staff
e-mail addresses.

OTHER USEFUL LINKS

Department of Veterans
Affairs Web site
www.va.gov

Center for Women Veterans
www.va.gov/womenvet

Office of Resolution
Management
www.va.gov/orm

DM&EEO ONLINE

The mission of the Office of DM&EEO is to provide leadership in creating and sustaining a diverse workplace free of discrimination at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. Here's a sampling of new online tools that can help *you* promote the employment of veterans, women, minorities, and people with disabilities:



- ▶ Women's History Month Resources
- ▶ Diversity News program line-up
- ▶ Online Speakers Bureau

Bookmark our site; we're here to serve you.



2003 DIVERSITY CALENDAR

Martin Luther King, Jr.'s Birthday

January 15 (observed January 19)

www.thekingcenter.org

Religious Freedom Day

January 16

www.firstfreedom.org/nrfd2002.html

Lunar New Year

(Korean, Vietnamese, Chinese and Taiwanese New Years)

January 22

www.c-c-c.org/chineseculture/festival/new_year/newyear.html

Black History Month

February

www.asalh.com

NABE 2004

(National Association for Bilingual Education)

February 4-7

Albuquerque, NM

www.nabe.org



Coming soon:

National Women's History Month

March

www.nwhp.org

Irish American Heritage Month

March

Human Rights Day (South Africa)

March 22

Pan-American Day

April 14

For theme information, visit our Web site and select the Calendar link.